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Miami Beach's Lincoln Road: Stores, galleries just off the beaten path

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Lincoln Road is a 15-block-long swatch of South Florida at its best and worst, of junk and jewels, of old and new, of black and white and color. It has stunning Art Deco architecture, stores with branches in Monte Carlo, galleries with radiant oil paintings in the window, two stores with resident cats and the House of Beads where you get glass beads like the stuff used to steal Manhattan Island.

Gertrude Teich and Dennis Britt were exchanging dreams Tuesday on Lincoln Road. Teich was going out of business. Britt was going into it.

Teich is a corsetier. She personally fits "ladies' undergarments." Not many corsetiers around anymore.

Britt plays guitar. Lots around who do that. Britt also claims to make the best coffee in Miami Beach.

Teich is 80, has worked since she was 14 and has



Model: Shuska

MARICE COHN BAND / Miami Herald Staff

RETRO: This rayon romper (\$55) is a throwback to the South Florida '50s. The embroidered chiffon scarf (\$30) and stylized sunglasses (\$40) complete the look.

PLEASE SEE LINCOLN, 2D

An outdoor walking tour of Lincoln Road, from the Atlantic Ocean to Biscayne Bay.
Eastern edge: the beach.
■ Zelick's Tobacco, 326 Lincoln Rd. Just 7½ feet wide from floor to ceiling of cigarettes, cigars and tobacco. Great aromas. One of the busiest Florida lottery outlets in Dade.

■ F.W. Woolworth Co., 401 Lincoln Rd. Classic 5 and 10 with everything from sewing needs to plastic placemats with the map of Florida. Lunch counter popular with Miami Beach police. Try peach sundae (\$1.75).

■ The Mideastern Dance Exchange, 622 Lincoln Rd. Where "dance is the universal language." Bellydancing and body conditioning. Note two resident cats. Both need work-outs.

Rd. Good restaurant, outdoor tables.

■ Carole Ltd., 718 Lincoln Rd. One of America's last corsetiers, Gertrude Teich, goes out of business Saturday.

■ U.S. Slicing Machine Co. Scale, 830 Lincoln Rd. Handsome free-standing scale — up to 300 pounds. Don't make them like this anymore. Nickels only.

■ Curras and Curras Art Gallery, 837 Lincoln Rd. Twin brothers offer handmade, hand-fired ceramics and tiles. Also offer sidewalk demonstrations.

■ Maison Gino, 845 Lincoln Rd. One of five experts in U.S. in restoration of porcelain and ivory.

■ South Florida Art Center, 800-810 Lincoln Rd., Original Burdines building in Miami Beach, now one of three centers on Lincoln Road offering low to moderately priced studio space to new and emerging artists from all over the world.

■ Sterling Building, 927-929 Lincoln Rd. Gorgeous Deco building, from green, black and coral terrazzo floors on breezeway entry to the Foundlings Club upstairs, a private club for women, "dining and intelligent conversation." Ask club director Karl Zois for a tour and you may get to see two of the best-looking public bathrooms anywhere.

■ Books & Books, 933 Lincoln Rd. Best book store in Miami Beach.

■ Espresso Bongo, 942 Lincoln Rd. Coffee house for art, poetry, film and dinner.

Keep walking. Biscayne Bay.



JOE RIMKUS JR. / Miami Herald Staff

SAD FAREWELL: Gertrude Teich, an 80-year-old corsetier, has worked since she was 14 and has been on Lincoln Road for 40 years.

A kitsch shoppers' mecca

LINCOLN, FROM 1D

been on Lincoln Road for 40 years. "Back when Lincoln Road was Lincoln Road, like Fifth Avenue in New York."

She owns Carole Ltd., a corsetry shop at 718 Lincoln Rd. She got the shop after Carole died, Carole's husband died, the landlord died and Gertrude Teich, who told her mother she would never be poor, paid the back rent.

Over the years Teich, who has no children, began calling her shop "baby doll."

Now there is a new landlord, and he rented Carole Ltd.'s space to someone new who wants to open a gift shop there. "People come in and they are crying 'Where am I going to get my bras?'" Teich said.

At 3 p.m. Saturday, Teich will turn the lock on baby doll's front door and walk away.

"I worry about when I get up in the morning and I got no place to go. But it was good to me. These things come to an end."

Two blocks away, Dennis Britt is planning a birth by grand opening of Espresso Bongo, a 1960s-style Bohemian coffee house. Handbills for Espresso Bongo show the face

of Bob Dylan back when Dylan was from Duluth, his name was Zimmerman, Bohemian coffee houses were in and Britt was a baby.

Elsewhere on Lincoln Road on Tuesday you could find Irving Sultan at Maison Gino offering 25 percent discounts on Hummel figurines, kitschy German collectibles, including one from 1947 priced at \$450. Possibly going up.

"It's not that they keep going up but that the dollar keeps going down," said Sultan, who has been at 845 Lincoln since 1951, monitoring the porcelain market.

Three doors away were twin brothers, Ronald and Nelson Curras, firing their primitive, Art Deco and Art Nouveau ceramics, priced from \$10 to \$500. The twins are breathtakingly identical, are 57, came to the United States from Cuba 11 years ago and say "the future is good."

Down at the eastern end of the Road where Art Deco hotels attract European tourists and McDonald's and Burger King are crowded at breakfast, you could get a peachy sunrise sundae for \$1.75 at the stool counter at Woolworth's, a pink guayabera at Mr. R's for \$26.95 or a pouch of fresh Russian Prawda cigarette tobacco

for \$3 at Zelick's Tobacco.

"Every brand of cigarette from every country is here. We are an institution," said Alex Gimelstein, who said he was vice president of Zelick's.

This must be one of the few 7.5-foot-wide stores in the world with every brand of cigarette from every country that also has a vice president. Gimelstein has been working at Zelick's since he was 7. His son Josh, 9, now works there. "A wizard on the Lotto machines," said his dad.

Lincoln Road runs 15 blocks from the Atlantic Ocean to Biscayne Bay. Its fortunes have been up and down more times than hemlines, like the city, like all of South Florida. Most of the people there Tuesday said things were slowly going up again.

Art galleries now outnumber shoe stores. B.C. Chong, a fancy Chinese restaurant from Coconut Grove, has moved into 915 Lincoln Rd., replacing a popular Italian restaurant, Johnny's.

Styles come and go. People come and go. Mostly they come. Whether for endless summer, palm trees, Art Deco buildings from the 1930s, low rents or low rates, the freedom to fail or to succeed, they keep coming. Mostly for the promise.